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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (08/19): Palestinians continue to call for a full settlement freeze; Dailies feature Consul General's farewell interview

Main Stories:

President Barack Obama's meeting with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on August 18 receives front page coverage in the local press. Obama expressed his optimism about reaching a peace agreement between the Palestinians and Israel, and called on the Arab states and Palestinians to take confidence-building steps in order to pave the way for a peace agreement in the region. Mubarak reiterated that the Arab states won't take any steps towards normalizing relations with Israel unless the latter completely halts all settlement activity.

Al-Quds and Al-Ayyam front page and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida runs inside page coverage on Consul General Jake Waller's exit interview with the three dailies on August 17. Waller spoke about his experience as the Consul General and the friendships that he built over the past four years. Waller praised the economic and security improvements throughout the West Bank under the leadership of Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad and expressed his optimism about achieving an independent Palestinian state in the next two years. Waller reiterated that achieving peace in the Middle East is a priority for President Obama, and that he will remain engaged until it is achieved. The CG stressed that the US calls for a complete freeze on settlement activity and home demolitions. Waller noted that the Sixth Fatah Party Congress was an internal Palestinian affair, and said that he did not intervene in its proceedings. Regarding Hamas, Waller clearly indicated that if Hamas wants to have a role in the political solution, it has to accept the Quartet principles. Finally, Waller urged all Palestinians "not to lose hope."

Al-Ayyam runs front page news citing Wafa and Israeli daily Maariv quoting Israeli right wing ministers noting on August 18 during their visit to settlements in the West Bank that "the settlements are legal and the construction will continue everywhere."

Al-Quds front pages news that an Egyptian security delegation conducted a series of meetings on August 18 in Ramallah with representatives from Hamas and Fatah in preparation for the next round of national unity and reconciliation talks scheduled for August 25 in Cairo. -----

BLOCK QUOTES:

1) Al-Quds independent daily runs an editorial under the title, "We don't need good intentions, we need implementation" (08/19): "What's important at this stage is not to show good intentions or repeat the same statements. What counts is how to implement the vision of the international community, how to force Israel to halt settlement activity, how to prove the US administration's credibility and seriousness about achieving peace, and how to prove its commitment to putting an end to the conflicts in the region."

2) Omar Hilmi Al-Ghoul opines in Al-Ayyam independent daily under the headline "Did Israel freeze settlement construction?" (08/19): "The Israeli game won't deceive the US or the EU anymore ... All

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international players must force Israel to freeze settlement activity now and forever. They all have the power to make Israel abide by these demands and respect international law in order to

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rescue the peace process."

WALLES